May 10, 2012

Dear Members of the House Ways & Means Committee:

I am a resident of New York City with strong ties to a rural dairy farming region in upstate New York that is also at the heart of some major bird migration routes between the Catskills and Adirondacks, and I am writing to urge you as strongly as possible to immediately and permanently end ALL production tax credits and any other federal support for industrial wind energy.

While the wind industry – which has been trying to make major inroads into heavily dairy farmed, relatively heavily populated and environmentally sensitive rural areas in upstate New York -- touts wind energy's generation "capacity," actual production is far lower because of the intermittent nature of wind. Wind energy is also very costly to transmit over long distances.

Because of this and because of the wind industry's long-term reliance on billions of dollars in federal subsidies, it is an outrageously costly and inefficient form of energy production that this country simply cannot afford.

In addition, while some wind projects in remote desert or other areas may be OK, they are completely inappropriate for relatively populated rural areas like upstate New York that are heavily farmed and/or environmentally sensitive. A growing body of evidence also indicates that wind projects through their turbines' noise, vibrations, and other impacts can cause substantial harm to nearby residents, farm animals, and property values, as well as to migratory birds and other wildlife.

Wind projects and turbines (including some now planned that will be some 50 stories high – much higher than the Capitol dome in Washington, D.C.), built on high ground or fragile ridges and visible for miles around, along with their associated transmission lines, not only scar the landscape and cause environmental harm, but create industrial areas that can permanently alter the character of rural communities. Congress has a strong responsibility not only to look out for the interests of such impacted residents and small agricultural communities, but also to protect our nation's treasured and environmentally sensitive areas of exceptional national beauty, including the Great Lakes and upstate New York, as a patrimony for generations to come. Wind turbine projects do not belong in these areas.

At a time of severely strained budgets, when every tax dollar should be spent for maximum long-term benefit, earmarking any further PTC or other funding for the costly wind industry that can not only cause the harm discussed above but that has only a negligeable effect on CO2 reduction – and thus hardly even helps to address climate change -- amounts to pouring money down the drain into a giant white elephant.

How can it possibly make sense to continue building even more wind projects – each of which costs millions of dollars to erect and comes with a costly ten-year subsidy built in – when their long-term costs will not be sustainable, their life spans will be relatively short, and they will eventually require much additional funding to be spent unproductively to decommission?

It would make far more sense to create valuable long-term jobs and to foster our nation's future economic competitiveness by building small gas or coal-fired plants with state-of-the-art filter and other clean-energy technology close to their prospective markets, while also channeling some scarce funding to other forms of truly "green" energy, such as solar power. Substantial funding should also be earmarked for modernizing our country's outdated infrastructure, including roads and bridges.

In conclusion, I urge you to permanently end the Production Tax Credit and any other federal or other subsides for industrial wind energy. On balance, industrial wind energy is NOT green and should not be propped up with any further taxpayer dollars.

Thank you very much for your consideration.
Sincerely,
         Leslie Weaver

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Title of hearing: "Hearing on Certain Expiring Tax Provisions"